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C O N F I D E N T I A L LUANDA 000002

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: PRESIDENT'S SPEECH FORETELLS CABINET CHANGE AFTER
ADOPTION OF CONSTITUTION

(U) Classified by Ambassador Dan Mozena, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) As is tradition, President Dos Santos delivered on December 28 a speech of new year's greeting to a group of about three thousand people, including members of government, parliamentarians, and civil society. Contrary to tradition, the speech was extremely short - only four minutes - and extemporaneous. It was televised and transmitted nationally.

In his remarks, Dos Santos called for greater transparency in public administration, promised to implement the promises made by the ruling MPLA at its December party congress, and emphasized the need to move on from immediate post-war priorities to longer term issues. Dos Santos said he would be announcing a new, smaller government shortly, and that this government "would be formed as soon as the new constitution was approved." He offered no further details during his speech.

¶2. (C) Comment: The president's speech was notable for three reasons. First, he continued, in general terms, the theme of transparency and the fight against corruption that he raised during the MPLA congress, and again used the now famous phrase "zero tolerance" for corruption. While the GRA has yet to take concrete actions in this regard since the congress, Angolans have certainly taken notice of his repetition of this theme. Second, there is considerable interest in what the promised ministerial rejigging might bring, although Dos Santos made no mention of the specifics. Independent media has speculated that General Manuel Vieira Dias "Kopelipa" - head of the president's Military Secretariat and a very influential insider - might move to the Ministry of Public Works. If true, this rumor could mean a notable change in the make-up of the president's most inner circle, and might herald new management of Angola's cozy relationship with its Chinese creditors, which Kopelipa currently manages. Finally, the president's comment that the cabinet change, which he expected "within a few weeks," would follow adoption of the new constitution suggests that the constitutional drafting project may come to a close sooner than expected. End comment.

MOZENA